

**NOTICE OF INTENT TO ADOPT
A MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION**

November 9, 2016

LEAD AGENCY: City of Sonora
94 N. Washington Street
Sonora, CA 95370

CONTACT PERSON: Paula M. Daneluk 209-532-3508

PROJECT TITLE: Dragoon Gulch Trail

PROJECT LOCATION: 11291 Racetrack Road

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The City of Sonora proposes to complete the build-out of the Dragoon Gulch Recreational Area, which is owned and operated by the City of Sonora. Approximately 35 acres were previously developed with a network of four (4) foot wide natural surface trails and the proposed plan would extend the existing trail system throughout the remaining 67 acres. The proposed trail system would be built as a multi-use trail for pedestrians and cyclists.

Dragoon Gulch, the Trail's namesake, is a seasonal waterway, with headwaters approximately 2,000 feet north of Racetrack Road which creates the northern boundary of the project area. The uses surrounding the Dragoon Gulch Trail area includes primarily residential and some commercial uses. As shown in the Aerial Picture, the western boundary of the project is a residential neighborhood along Leland Drive and Rosebud Road. The proposed project designates an 80 foot buffer between the natural surface trails and the neighborhood fence boundaries. The eastern side is also primarily residential bordered by Dragoon Court and Arbona Circle North. On the southeast side is an existing park entrance off of Alpine Lane. North of the property is residential. The southern boundary is currently undeveloped.

The currently undeveloped area of Dragoon Gulch Park lies on the westerly side of the Dragoon Gulch ravine. Within the proposed expansion area are some westerly-facing slopes abutting the City/County line at the westerly boundary of the project, however, the Dragoon Gulch Trail Area predominately contains easterly-facing slopes. Three distinct summits areas are proposed to offer views of the surrounding area, but are not currently accessible via the existing trail network. The Dragoon Gulch expansion area is densely overgrown with underbrush, primarily Manzanita and poison oak. Oak Woodlands and Oak Chaparral ecotypes predominate the area. Clearing for trail access and fire control would be completed in the First Phase of the project. Fuel removal would be accomplished by thinning and limbing up Manzanita, and by removing dead brush near the trail, though sensitivity to views and preservation of the natural context would be incorporated into the project in all phases. Setbacks from existing residences, seasonal waterways, and historical or natural resources have been identified and would be incorporated during the build-out of the project as discussed in the Dragoon Gulch Trail Master Plan.

To accommodate trail expansion, a new 20-stall parking lot with other amenities such as a bathroom area and picnic area are proposed adjacent to the current caretaker's residence. The proposed parking lot would be situated on a previously cleared horse coral, and would use the existing paved driveway for egress. Another roadway would be constructed, as shown in the Proposed Access and Parking Area figure, to allow for a single lane ingress to the site. Adjacent to the proposed parking lot, the build-out would include a public restroom that would be approximately 160 square feet and include a drinking fountain, a

group picnic area with an overhead structure and picnic tables, as well as demonstration planting areas. The existing barn may be re-purposed to include storage or other activities.

The existing driveway entrance off Racetrack Road would be expanded to a two-way driveway, and may ultimately include a pull-out lane and/or bus pull-out and pad with a transit shelter. These improvements may require a right-of-way dedication to the County to facilitate the ultimate street section, and would be setback accordingly. The driveway entrance would include a median to preserve existing trees and allow turn-around movements prior to the gates that would control vehicle access to the rest of the property. Access would be provided by a new paved driveway, approximately 800 feet long and 12 feet wide. Construction for this access would require grading a new bench in the existing slope above the existing driveway, and may include short sections of gabion retaining structure, no greater than six (6) feet high (four (4) feet exposed), to minimize the extent of the impacted area. The existing driveway and proposed access and parking lot would support small passenger vehicles and trucks, but would not support school buses, trailers, or other longer-wheel based vehicles.

The proposed project designates a portion of the trails to meet accessible codes to provide access to users of all abilities. The accessible portion of the trails includes a summit opportunity and a path with a less than 5% grade. Rest areas (minimum five (5) feet X five (5) feet wide) would be provided at 200 feet maximum intervals along the accessible trail sections to allow for passing and intermittent stops. Benches would be ultimately provided at intervals no greater than 600 feet. One new accessible parking stall would be provided within the proposed 20-stall parking lot. An accessible path of travel would be provided to all facilities, include the restroom, drinking fountain, picnic area, and trailhead.

As shown in the Proposed Trail Map, the proposed trail network would transverse the entire Dragoon Gulch Park Area. Construction of the trail will result in slope disturbance above and below the trail to varying degrees. Experienced trail builders or supervision by experienced trail builders would be utilized to create trails with Best Management Practices.

The following three phases would be implemented as an incremental approach to construction that would allow an immediate shovel ready project as well as allow for the inclusion of community based organizational involvement.

- **Phase 1- Initial Expansion:** This phase consists of a portion of the new trail extending from the existing trail network to a summit.
- **Phase 2- Main Trail Build-out:** this phase includes a portion of the remainder of the trail network, including natural surface trail construction and signage.
- **Phase 3- Amenities and Parking:** The most intensive and costly phase, this will complete build-out of the master plan.

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the City of Sonora has prepared a Mitigated Negative Declaration, pursuant to the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), for the above described project.

The project site for the Dragoon Gulch Trail is not listed on the Hazardous Waste and Substances Sites List as set forth in Government Code Section 65962.5.

PUBLIC REVIEW PERIOD: A **30** day public review period for the Mitigated Negative Declaration will commence on November 9, 2016 through December 9, 2016 for interested individuals and public agencies to submit written comments on the document. Any written comments on the Mitigated Negative Declaration must be received at the above address within the public review period. Copies of the Mitigated Negative Declaration and Initial Study are available for review at City Hall at the above address and on the website at www.sonoraca.com

PUBLIC MEETING: This matter has been **tentatively** set for the City Council on **December 19, 2016**.